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The Utility and Representational Opportunity of Latin Novellas

TERESA RAMSBY

Abstract: This paper argues for the use of the Latin novella in Latin, educational contexts, particularly within the K-12 classroom. The design of Latin novellas corresponds to features associated with Comprehensible Input: offering a limited and repeated vocabulary, and providing compelling narratives. The many Latin novellas now published broaden the opportunity for narrative selection by Latin students, giving students a choice in what they read. Moreover, many narratives feature central characters that increase the representation of layers of society typically found in Latin textbooks or in the ancient, classical sources. By way of example, *Cloelia*, by Ellie Arnold, receives focus in this paper.

Key Words: Latin novella, Comprehensible Input, vocabulary, compelling, choice, representation, *Cloelia*.

The Latin novella has been receiving much attention in pedagogical circles recently, as demonstrated by a number of recent panels and articles on their use.¹ As I will argue below, the Latin novella resolves at least two problematic issues that have persistently plagued efforts in teaching Latin: the one-size-fits-all nature of narratives in Latin textbooks, and the focus in Latin textbooks on the hegemonic and male-dominated nature of Roman society and the nature of power within that society. Professor Jacqueline (Jacqui) Carlon, our honorand, cares deeply about issues of accessibility and equity in the Latin classroom, and her advocacy for those things has, to some extent, led to the development of this new resource.² These works, authored by writers with advanced understanding of the language, offer the possibility for students to read something that interests them in Latin, and allow students to read narratives from the perspectives of people too frequently unheard in authentic Roman sources. The Latin novella thus contributes to an experience reading Latin that can be individualized and enlightening, rather than assigned and predictable. In this piece, I will address the nature and utility of the Latin novella, and then I will discuss one novella that features a woman and her story in a way that has influenced later works in this genre: *Cloelia* by Ellie Arnold.

For a very long time, Latin instructors of all levels have been discussing the problems students face when they progress from the Latin stories or passages in their textbooks to the Latin written by ancient Roman writers.³ The publishing industry's solution to that problem tends to be new textbooks with new storylines that attempt to grant the student a re-configured opportunity to experience Latin through reading, one that will, allegedly, better prepare them for Roman literature. One of the major problems with textbooks is that,

¹ John Piazza, in his 2017 article, offers an extensive justification for using “beginner novels” in the Latin classroom, and provides short reviews of the novellas available at that time. The panel “Novellas: Aligning Purpose and Audience” took place at the 2021 annual meeting of the Classical Association of New England, and three papers from that panel were published in *Classical Outlook*: Conway (2021), Piantaggini (2021), and Vanderpool (2021b).

² I commend Jacqui Carlon for all her outstanding work as a mentor and teacher for so many Latin teachers as they learned about and prepared for their careers. Her mentoring and advice over the last decade have been incredibly helpful to me as well: *gratias maximas, carissima*. I also wish to thank Peter Barrios Lech for his patient work in organizing this volume, and Aaron Seider for his work as editor of *NECJ*, bringing this issue to publication.

³ Kenneth Kitchell's 2000 article addresses many aspects of this, with focus on the cultural knowledge required to read any Roman authored text. Jacqui Carlon also addresses this in her 2015 article. Another relevant piece is the 1993 article by Dexter Hoyos “Decoding of Sight-Reading? Problems with Understanding Latin.” There are many articles and blog sites addressing this issue, and I point the reader to Katharine Russell's 2018 article which summarizes many of the issues and provides key bibliography.

however many passages they include, the amount of text and the storyline is bound by the book itself. Students can read ahead if they want to, but they will have to read the same text with their classmates eventually. Teachers can innovate on the story and offer texts of their own, but most teachers do not have time to do this regularly or in a way that satisfies individual students' interests. Consider also that, by contrast, the modern language teacher has an almost unlimited number of textual resources – magazines, comic books, newspapers – in the target language, and can easily provide opportunities for students to find something interesting to them; they do not have to *create* the texts their students read for pleasure or interest.⁴

Latin classrooms in particular suffer from this problem of a textbook-controlled narrative that not everyone will enjoy. There are surely cases where no one in the class enjoys a particular reading in the textbook, and other in-class work becomes preferable to reading the story on offer. Even in cases where most or all students enjoy a textbook narrative, there is little opportunity to branch out beyond it. A teacher may find a passage from a Roman author that is level-appropriate, but then faces the problem of scaffolding for students the challenges of Roman literature, with all its cultural, historical, and linguistic baggage. Granting students space within the class for independent reading of Latin, or “free voluntary reading” (FVR), is a method that encourages students to think of Latin as something they can enjoy individually and privately, as well as within the academic context. The Latin novella can serve as an excellent bridge between the grammar-relevant texts in the textbook, and the concept of reading Latin out of interest, or even for fun, as Emma Vanderpool argues throughout her recent article (2021b). Reading a two-line poem by Catullus with the teacher's aid and commentary, as comprehensible as that may be, may not be as satisfying or confidence-building as reading alone, in Latin, a chapter-book with illustrations on Psyche and Cupid (Olimpi, 2017).

The notion that a narrative used in learning contexts should be comprehensible and compelling is based in common sense, of course, but is also linked to findings in linguistics research of several recent decades. In her groundbreaking 2013 article, Jacqui Carlon introduced many in Classics to the researchers in applied linguistics who have promoted significant innovations in methods of instruction related to second language acquisition. Key ideas that emerge from the research is that students learning a language need to acquire a core vocabulary to read fluently, and that they continue to acquire vocabulary through reading.⁵ This branch of applied linguistics, dubbed Second Language Acquisition (SLA), argues for methods conducive to the acquisition of vocabulary tied to meanings of words in their relationship to other words, rather than memorization of individual words in a list. In a Latin class, such methods include the repeated exposure of vocabulary through spoken Latin, where phrases and simple sentences are repeated frequently, and the consistent use of Latin texts that students can read proficiently, with few glosses or notes.⁶ This process of guiding students to develop a core vocabulary, that then leads to higher proficiency in reading, is called “comprehensible input,” or “CI,” and texts that meet this criteria of CI-related methods contain a high volume of known vocabulary words (95% to 98% in one recent finding), making them ideal for proficient reading.⁷ Emma Vanderpool, an author of several novellas, states it clearly, “a complicated narrative in the target language is of no use if students cannot read it” (2021a, 61).

Another idea explored in these studies is that material selected for student-reading be compelling, a simple enough concept: if students enjoy reading the material, they are likely

⁴ See, for example, the 1999 book by Paul Sanderson on using newspapers in the language classroom.

⁵ See Stephen Krashen's 1989 article for articulation of the “input hypothesis.”

⁶ There are many resources on these methods created by teachers and practitioners, and I point the interested reader to the helpful and expansive list that Justin Slocum Bailey offers on his site, *Indwelling Language*: <http://indwellinglanguage.com/linen-a-latin-teaching-portal/#resources>.

⁷ For a recent study on the correlation between reading proficiency and vocabulary knowledge, see Schmitt, *et al.*, 2011.

to do more of it. The sheer variety of subjects covered by the novellas that are available, and emerging in increasing numbers, makes it possible for students to find something compelling to them, provided that they have access to the novellas in their classroom or school library.⁸ Most novella authors carefully correlate their vocabularies to frequently used words in classical Latin texts.⁹ Even first-year Latin students should be able to find a Latin novella that corresponds to their vocabulary knowledge and proficiency in reading. The more compelling the novella is, the more willingly the student will meet the challenge of new vocabulary, selectively glossed in the margins of novellas, for the sake of continuing the story.

Tiered readings is another effective method to bridge the gap between textbook readings and ancient Roman writings. Tiered readings are passages from a text that have been simplified for easier comprehension.¹⁰ The teacher then has the option to present successively more complex versions of the text until the students can comprehend the original text: this is a method that I use to some degree in my undergraduate seminars.¹¹ A problem with tiered reading, however, is that even simplified texts by Cicero, Caesar, and Vergil, authors long taught in the advanced Latin classroom, still require much foreknowledge and context. Students are unlikely to read a passage from the *Aeneid* and understand, on their own, the sweep and significance of the story's plot, or the literary and cultural history that underlies the epic poem.¹² If we want students to read Latin on their own, thereby increasing their proficiency and comfort level reading the language, we need texts that are comprehensible and compelling, and that can be appreciated in solitary reading.

One may have legitimate questions about the quality of the Latin within the novellas on offer, and, as in any literary genre, there are texts of greater and lesser quality, depending on how one judges quality. As Daniel Conway demonstrates in his recent article, metrics of syntactical simplicity, complexity, or narrative quality are difficult to establish, even within a single author's collection (2021). The notion of a novella's "*latinitas*," a word popular among practitioners of spoken Latin, refers to the vocabulary and structure of the Latin used: the extent of English-cognate usage in the Latin (rather than words classical authors would use), the Latin's adherence to the syntactical patterns, modes of expression, and grammatical rules of classical sources or later Latin sources. I consider these judgments to be of academic import, essentially, and I encourage the reader to remember that Latin novellas are meant to provide engaging narratives in Latin for young readers. I have read several of these novellas, and I have not yet found a book with multiple, egregious errors in the Latin – only the occasional lapse. The worst I have seen in a Latin novella is repetitiveness of ideas and words, in which case the author is using a limited vocabulary and simple syntax for the sake of a lower-proficiency reader, which can prohibit a variety of expression. Even this is not necessarily an impediment to the beginning Latin student: as a parent, I recall the long-listed repetitiveness in books by Theodor Geisel (Dr. Seuss) that delighted the young reader in my household, and frustrated only the parent reading the book aloud for the twentieth (or hundredth) time. The significance of relative proficiency, and to what extent that shapes

⁸ The Latin teacher interested in creating a Latin novella library might seek out the numerous grants made available for educational resources by regional organizations for the promotion of Latin, such as the CANE educational grant: https://caneweb.org/new/?page_id=35. Lance Piantaggini maintains a list of available Latin novellas on his website *Magister P.*: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1bF8hZuxTDtgNMSSdonEX112JJaVYqoPH7w27Oju9ETs>.

⁹ Dickinson College Commentaries provides a well-known and much cited core vocabulary list: <https://dcc.dickinson.edu/vocab/core-vocabulary>. See Emma Vanderpool 2021a, 62–64, on her selection of vocabulary for a novella on gladiators (2021c) by aligning it to gladiator narratives in the *Cambridge Latin Course* (Stage 14) and *Ecce Romani* (Chapter 48).

¹⁰ See Lindsay Sears and Kevin Ballestrini (2019) on the method, its application, and its justification.

¹¹ For example, in my undergraduate Ovid course, I have students read several stories in the simplified versions provided by the useful textbook by Christine Albright (2019), with focus on key original passages from the story. Using this method, I concentrate their efforts of long-form reading and comprehension upon stories and passages that are particularly packed with literary artistry and material for analysis.

¹² See Kitchell (2000) for more on this problem.

perspective and judgment upon a narrative, is important to keep in mind – early Latin readers are less likely to judge a narrative for issues related to *latinitas*, and more likely to judge it for the story it presents.

Another problem shared by most textbook storylines and authentic texts is that they suffer from a narrowness of perspectives. In their attempt to be true to historical reality, and in their justifiable need to satisfy the refereed process of academic publishing houses, even textbooks that feature invented, fictional narratives tend to stay close to the known facts regarding social and political dynamics of the ancient world. By contrast, the five-part “Percy Jackson” series by Rick Riordan, loosely based on Greek mythology, is incredibly popular among young readers; yet, as critics have noted, an educated reader would quickly note the inaccuracies and liberties that abound in these novels.¹³ That’s just the point though: students read Riordan’s books because they are loosely connected to things that interest them in their academic classes, but that spark their imagination in a different way.

Here enters the utility of the Latin novella: marketed as they are, slim paperbacks, often with intriguing pictures on the cover (and sometimes including many illustrations throughout the book), covering topics that tend to be relevant to the ancient world (mythology, history, daily life), these novellas present an author’s imaginative perspective on a topic, expressed in Latin. There is a presumption that novellas dealing with historical topics will treat the topic appropriately, and they do, but perhaps with a twist – such as Emma Vanderpool’s *Surus: Fabula Belli et Elephantorum*, where Hannibal’s journey over the Alps is told from the perspective of not just the great Carthaginian commander, but also of his favorite elephant and the elephant’s trainer. The novella on a legend or myth, not bound by historical verity, typically tends to preserve the basic structure of the tale, but may bring greater focus to the mindset and actions of the principal characters, as seen, for example, in many of Andrew Olimpi’s novellas.¹⁴ Given the range of reader interests and the extent of knowledge we have about the ancient world, there is really no limit to the number of stories and approaches that can emerge within this genre.¹⁵ The Latin novella, therefore, plays an essential role in providing a platform for concentrated reading and learning in a way that is engaging and appropriate to the age-level and interests of the student.

The possibility for focus on women and their perspectives is an enticing aspect of the Latin novella, given that our access to literature written by women of the ancient Greek and Roman worlds is profoundly limited. There have been incisive critiques of the way slaves, and notably slave-women, are represented in many Latin textbooks, and similar complaints have been made about the way women are depicted.¹⁶ The dominant textbooks tend to depict the narrow realities of women’s lives in the ancient world where women are mothers or slaves, and girls are sisters, future brides, or slaves, and the more interesting narratives are driven by male characters. There are exceptions, as seen in the recent *Suburani* textbook, and in *Disce!* by Kenneth Kitchell and Thomas Sienkewicz, where women are frequently at the center of the narrative. Again, however, we return to the problem of the monolithic, one-size-fits-all narrative. The Latin novella, with its capability to present myriad characters within myriad plot-lines, provides greater opportunity for representation.

As we know, the Roman sources extant to us are sorely lacking in representations of women, particularly those with agency, and even those representations available to us often display ulterior authorial motives. Jacqui Carlon dedicated much of her research to the works of Pliny the Younger, and in particular his representation of the women of his social circle. Pliny makes available to us narratives of women’s deeds we would not otherwise know, but

¹³ See Rebecca Mead’s piece in *The New Yorker*, “The Percy Jackson Problem” for an astute diagnosis of the issues.

¹⁴ Andrew Olimpi provides a list of his novellas, many of them based on Greek mythology, on his site, *Comprehensible Classics*: <https://comprehensibleclassics.wordpress.com/publications/>.

¹⁵ Bolchazy Carducci has recently launched their own Latin novella series, as seen on their website: <https://www.bolchazy.com/Default.aspx>.

¹⁶ E.g.: see Kelly Dugan (2019) for an astute analysis of the problems of slave representation in Latin textbooks, and see Emily Amos (2020) on students’ perceptions of gender representation within the *Cambridge Latin Course*.

Carlson notes his portraits of women are self-serving to a great degree, a means of bolstering his self-image: “he presents an image of himself as interacting only with women of impeccable character and status,” to fashion “a portrait of the author’s best side” (2009, 220). Moreover, throughout our many Roman sources, if we seek in-depth development of character, or well-rounded attempts to explain women’s motivations, we look in vain. There is need for narratives that represent the wide range of activities and aspirations of women in ancient societies. Among modern fiction-writers in English, the re-envisioning of women in ancient texts has appeared for several decades, and since 2017 there have been at least a dozen top-selling, new volumes that re-explore women’s roles in ancient Greek and Roman myth and legend, such as the top-selling book *Circe* by Madeline Miller.¹⁷ The Latin novella provides an opportunity, therefore, to advance the interests of young people who want to learn Latin, and who want to learn about the ancient world, but who want to do so with stories that immerse them into the milieu of ancient Greece and Rome among characters with whom they can identify.

There are several Latin novellas that place female characters in the center of the narrative. Ellie Arnold wrote one of the first novellas on Cloelia, the heroine from Livy’s history (2016). Emma Vanderpool has written a novella on Amanirenas, the queen of Nubia who initially held off a Roman army attempting to expand into her territory in 25 BCE; a novella on Medusa that explores the injustice done to her by Neptune; and a novella on Eumachia, the enterprising and well-commemorated woman of Pompeii (2020). Rachel Ash has written a novella on Camilla from Vergil’s *Aeneid* with emphasis on the warrior woman’s perspective (2018). Andrew Olimpi offers us a compelling and nicely illustrated version of Psyche’s travails (2017). On the more fictional side of the spectrum, Lance Piantaggini provides a series of novellas that feature strong female central characters, such as a plebeian woman named Agrippina who secretly practices sword-fighting (2017).¹⁸ The idea here is that young readers may take delight in such content, and as they progress in their reading skills, they may find themselves increasingly interested in the challenges of reading works written by ancient or medieval or Renaissance authors.

A Latin novella worthy of analysis, and which I will dedicate the remainder of my essay to discussing, is *Cloelia: puella Romana*, written by Ellie Arnold and published in 2016. The novella presents the perspective of its protagonist Cloelia, while informing the reader of many aspects of Roman society along the way. First, however, a caveat: despite the points I made about the Latin novella being a work that students can read on their own, this novella is an example of one (and there are others) that may be more effective if guided by the teacher. *Cloelia* introduces difficult concepts regarding how virtue is designated differently for men and women in Roman society, and students may have questions about it, and benefit from teacher-led discussion. I will explain more about this below.

Arnold’s book features the heroics of Cloelia recorded in the second Book of Livy’s history (*AUC* 2.13) and in Valerius Maximus’s accounts of deeds of bravery (*de Fort.* 3.2.2). The young Cloelia leads her fellow Roman captives to freedom from a treaty-arranged hostage situation under the Etruscan king Porsenna, shortly after the Romans have expelled the Etruscan monarch Tarquinius in the (alleged) late-sixth-century BCE. Both Livy and Valerius contextualize Cloelia within the similarly brave deeds of contemporary men, Horatius Coclès and Mucius Scaevola, and Livy distinguishes her courage as *virtus*, a quality typically designated to men rather than women.¹⁹ Fittingly, then, Arnold uses the majority of her novella, leading up to Cloelia’s daring escape, to develop a sophisticated concept: the means by which Cloelia might have learned about her culture, its *mores*, and the nature

¹⁷ See, for example, “50 must-read books on Classical mythology”: <https://bookriot.com/2019/03/14/classical-mythology-retellings/>.

¹⁸ Again, see Piantaggini’s ongoing list for many more titles – many of which have female protagonists: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1bF8bZuxTDtqNMSSdonEX112JJaVYqoPH7w27Qju9ETs>.

¹⁹ Livy *AUC* 2.13. See Balmaceda (2017, 124-5) on the manly nature of *virtus* in general and how Cloelia merits the attribution in Livy.

of courage. Arnold depicts Cloelia's exposure to a succession of significant stories within her culture, mostly tales of Roman events, but also one Greek myth, all delivered within a domestic context. The reader thus gains multiple stories within this one novella, all of which bring focus to the notion of virtue, and how that shapes Cloelia's world-view: offering her a map for defying constructed, gendered expectations.

In the beginning of the novella, Cloelia is weaving with her mother and her mother's friend Lucretia (yes, *that* Lucretia). Her mother tells her daughter the story of Camilla from Vergil's *Aeneid*, whose death prompts a reaction of sadness from Cloelia, only to be told that in their society, women make clothes, not war. Even so, Cloelia tucks away this idea about women being brave and capable in battle. Weeks later, Cloelia's father reports terrible news – Lucretia is dead, and Rome is going to war. He tells Cloelia and her mother part of Lucretia's story, but is reluctant to reveal the terrible rape and suicide in the presence of his daughter, until his wife reminds him that in war, "*hostes scelera contra mulieres puellasque semper faciunt*" (14). Her father, therefore, tells the whole story, to which Cloelia reacts in horror, asking why Lucretia is dead, and Sextus Tarquinius, her attacker, is alive. Her mother reminds her of *pudicitia*, and explains that women of great virtue find it difficult to live if they have been so greatly dishonored. Cloelia's mother adds also that Sextus's actions violated Lucretia's vow of marriage (15: *votum matrimonii illius quoque violavit*), and that the gods are angry at any man or woman who breaks their vow, despite their agency in the matter. Cloelia's mother then follows this warning with the story of Kallisto, punished by Diana for being raped by Jupiter and, as the fearsome goddess sees it, breaking her vow of *pudicitia*; Diana asks: "*nonne tu votum mihi fecisti?*" (18). Cloelia's mother uses the story to explain that, according to Roman religious beliefs, the gods punish mortals for breaking their promises, no matter how minimal their agency may be in the process.

These are harsh lessons for a young reader to encounter, but we know from our sources that Romans organized their society, *mores*, and laws around gendered aspects of virtue, many of which were misogynistic.²⁰ I commend Arnold for not avoiding these realities of Roman culture, and for using the many facets of story-telling to explore how a young girl like Cloelia might have found the inspiration and inner strength to achieve what she did. Arnold points out in her preface that parts of her novella deemed inappropriate by a teacher can be removed from the text without damaging the main narrative. Regardless, I have seen this text used among high school audiences. Students express dismay or curiosity about the actions described, but the teachers then use that opportunity to talk about the plight of women in the ancient world, and to point to relevant aspects in modern times. Recent studies have shown that stories play an important role in helping students begin to grapple with life and the human condition, and that they build empathy.²¹ Even so, the nature of the lessons in *Cloelia* justifies making sure that the audience is appropriately prepared for the content and any discussion that may ensue.²²

The novella continues: Mucius Scaevola appears in the house of Brutus, whose daughter Iunia is hosting Cloelia for the day, and Cloelia overhears Scaevola tell his tale of bravery when discovered in the Etruscan camp (placing his right hand into a flame to prove how stalwart Romans can be). Right after this story is told, Porsenna sends messengers to ask for hostages in return for a truce with Rome. Iunia and Cloelia end up as hostages in the Etruscan camp, and while there, Cloelia encourages her fellow captives with the story she knows about Horatius at the bridge – this is the only story Cloelia tells herself, and we are not told how she has learned it. Shortly after that, she leads her fellow Romans to freedom, but

²⁰ The notion of *levitas animi* (the idea that women possessed a "frivolity of mind") was encoded in Roman law, and justified women's exclusion from political engagement and self-determination, (Gaius *Inst.* 1.144): *veteres enim voluerunt feminas, etiamsi perfectae aetatis sint, propter animi levitatem in tutela esse.* ("For our forebears wanted women, on account of their frivolity of mind, even if they were of full age, to have guardians.")

²¹ See, for example, the article by Emy Koopman (2016) on this topic.

²² See the edited volume by Fiona McHardy and Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz (2014) for great suggestions on presenting such difficult topics in the classroom.

when she arrives home, her parents remind her that the hostage situation was part of a treaty (a promise made) to protect Rome (37: *tu es votum quod Romam servare potest*), and that she must return to the Etruscan camp. Due to Cloelia's bravery, Porsenna declares that only she must be returned, that she may choose other hostages for release, and that the truce will be upheld. So back Cloelia goes, and Arnold, true to the narrative in our ancient historians, leaves it uncertain as to whether or not Cloelia will ever return home. As she departs, Arnold's Cloelia remembers the stories that have formed her, particularly those about women, reminding the reader how artfully the novella has created a narrative to support Cloelia's courage (40): "*pro domo pugnabo, ut Camilla pro Italia pugnavit. votum meum tenebo, ut Lucretia et Kallisto vota sua tenere volebant*" ("I will fight for my home, just as Camilla fought for Italy. I will keep my vow, just as Lucretia and Kallisto wished to keep theirs.")

Arnold successfully imagines the process whereby a girl like Cloelia might learn examples of courage and deconstruct gendered notions of virtue: she hears the stories of Camilla and Kallisto, told by her mother, the tragic end of Lucretia, told by her father, and the ordeal of Mucius Scaevola, told by Mucius himself. While in captivity, Arnold's Cloelia engages in the oral tradition herself, telling her comrades the story of Horatius Cocles, a story that mentally prepares them for the dangerous escape they will soon achieve. Whereas Livy and Valerius Maximus offered Cloelia's story as a glorious aberration of girls behaving like men, demonstrating Roman virtue (even Roman girls do extraordinary things), Arnold presents a girl who learns from and partakes in a tradition of sharing edifying narratives, a tradition that includes the perspectives of women, and is often designed for a female audience.²³

This idea that women's deeds were discussed in an oral tradition within a domestic context has resonance within our ancient sources. As Jacqui Carlon discusses in her study, Pliny the younger had particular praise for Arria, the wife of Caecina Paetus, who famously stabbed herself before her husband's eyes to give him the courage to commit suicide, as ordered by the emperor Claudius in 42 CE (2009, 43-48). Carlon goes on to add that Pliny quotes Arria eight times in his epistle 3.16, more than any other person in the entire collection (47). When Pliny closes the letter, he points out to his correspondent that although Arria's words, spoken at the moment of her self-sacrifice, "it doesn't hurt, Paetus" (*Pacte, non dolet*), are quite famous (*illud quidem ingens fama*), her other sayings, Pliny points out, are not widely known (*haec nulla circumfert*).²⁴ Carlon renders the idea this way, "one's greatest deeds can easily be unknown outside of one's intimate circle" (47). Thus Pliny's offhand remark reveals the extensive oral tradition that preserved women's deeds and sayings within a familial context, a tradition that often went unrecorded in literary form. We are indeed grateful when we find other glimpses of women's courageous deeds, as recorded in the famous inscription dedicated "to my wife" (*uxori*), in which a grateful husband praises in detail his wife's efforts to save his life, among many other notable achievements within the chaos of the triumvirate. Such discoveries, however, should cause us to consider how many such accounts we lack.²⁵

²³ In Vanderpool's recent 2020 novella, *Medusa*, we see Medusa's mother telling her daughter stories to warn her about, first, the dangers of arrogance toward the gods, via the story of Arachne, and, second, the dangers of using one's gifts to help cruel men, via the story of Ariadne.

²⁴ Pliny opens his letter (3.16) with this remark: "I have often noted that some deeds and words of men and women are more famous, but others are more significant" (*adnotasse videor facta dictaque virorum feminarumque alia clariora esse alia maiora*).

²⁵ The "*Laudatio Turia*" inscription is *CIL* VI 1527, 31670, 37053 = *ILS* 8393. See Josiah Osgood's study (2014) of this woman's story and the context it provides to the triumviral period; Osgood does not support the identification of this *uxor* as the Turia referred to in Valerius Maximus 6.7.2. Regarding the tantalizing work that still remains to be done to try to reconstruct the missing narratives of so many women, I point the reader to a piece by Amy Richlin (2013) that attempts to reconstruct the non-extant letters of Terentia to her husband Cicero, working off of Cicero's letters to and about her.

Arnold's re-telling in *Cloelia*, therefore, cleverly demonstrates an oral tradition that can shape a society, a culture, and a young girl's potential for bravery. By the same token, with the stories of Lucretia and Kallisto, Arnold grants her Latin-learning audience the space to consider the layers of stringent authority placed on women's bodies, lives, and behaviors by the societies in which they live. *Cloelia* shows that girls in the ancient world, just like girls in the modern one, seek to find ways to pursue their own greatness. In the ever growing array of Latin novellas available, all young people are likely to find something that speaks to them. The Latin novellas now available offer Latin teachers a wonderful opportunity to capitalize on the interests, curiosity, and desire for escapism and edification among early Latin readers. Obtaining a collection of these relatively inexpensive books for the Latin classroom is an enriching and effective way to help young people build their Latin reading skills, to the point where reading works by classical, medieval, and Renaissance authors might become a more desirable objective for all involved.

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